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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 000674

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DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRIED, DAS BRYZA AND EUR/CARC

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: ABKHAZIA: PRELIMINARY REPORT ON KODORI ATTACK

REF: TBILISI 585

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) In a March 29 meeting of the Friends of the Secretary General (FSG), UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Jean Arnault and UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) Commander General Khattak briefed the FSG on the preliminary findings of the Joint Fact Finding Group's (JFFG) investigation into the March 11 attack on Upper Kodori. Khattak said that there were 18 impact points, 17 of which were most likely the result of GRAD missiles and one of which was most likely the result of an anti-tank missile fired from a helicopter. He said the attacks came from a southerly direction, although could not specify the distance they traveled. Khattak, who was careful in his remarks, said that he could not speculate on the timing of the release of the JFFG's report. Arnault and Khattak plan to be in New York April 5 to brief Missions of the FSG. End summary.

#### JFFG TIMELINE

¶2. (C) In a March 29 meeting of the FSG called by German Ambassador Flor, SRSG Arnault and UNOMIG Commander Khattak briefed on the preliminary, confidential findings of the JFFG's investigation into the March 11 attack on Upper Kodori. Mark Perry (U.S.), Ambassador MacLare (UK), Ambassador Le Fort (France), and Vassily Korchmar (Russia) represented the FSG. Khattak gave a brief summary of the timeline of the JFFG's actions, noting that all sides have been cooperative and forthcoming in the investigation. He said the JFFG made two trips to Upper Kodori to examine the evidence, one from March 13 to 15 and another from March 23 to 25. During the two trips, the group examined all the impact sites.

18 IMPACT SITES, 17 LIKELY GRAD ROCKETS, 1 ANTI-TANK ROCKET

¶3. (C) Khattak confirmed that there were 18 impact sites, 17 of which "in all likelihood" were craters of projectiles from artillery rockets. He said the parties of the JFFG - the Abkhaz, Georgians, CIS Peacekeeping Force and UNOMIG - generally agreed that the projectiles were likely GRAD rockets. He said the Georgian Government building in Chkhalt'a was probably hit by an anti-tank guided missile of the kind normally launched by a helicopter. He noted that more investigation needs to be done on the kind of rocket fired at the building -- some of which, he said, can be fired from a helicopter and some of which cannot -- but said that the building was hit by an anti-tank rocket.

#### AGREEMENT ON NUMBER OF IMPACTS, TYPE OF ARTILLERY, DIRECTION OF FIRING

¶4. (C) Khattak said that he brought in artillery and aviation experts to provide expert opinion to the JFFG. On artillery, he said there is agreement in the JFFG on the number of craters (17, 9 of which indicate the kind of weapon used), that artillery was used, and that the ammunition used was BM-21. Although the JFFG agreed that the attacks came from a southerly direction (all the craters are on the northern side of the Kodori Valley), there is no agreement on where exactly they

came from or what distance they traveled. He said there was no evidence of small arms fire.

HELO ROUTE FROM NORTH REQUIRES EXPERTISE AND EQUIPMENT

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15. (C) On aviation, although he did not believe witness reports of identifying a particular type of helicopter, he said that there were enough reports of seeing and hearing a helicopter to believe that at least one helicopter was present. Khattak said that any helicopter pat from the north would require a pilot both experienced in night flying and with night vision equipment due to the difficulty of the terrain.

Although he could not say with 100 percent certainty, he noted again that it looked like there was at least one helicopter which hit at least one site.

NO SPECULATION ON TIMING OF RELEASE OF REPORT

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16. (C) In response to questions, Khattak would not speculate on the timing of the release of the JFFG's report. He noted that the investigation continues and that they would like the report to be as certain as possible, with the understanding that time is not unlimited.

He said it would be possible to have a report with a split opinion. He noted that the artillery impacts were clustered at two points that were close together. When asked if the firings could have been done in a way to avoid casualties, he said that artillery has an impact zone which is determined by a number of factors including weather, distance and gun barrel size, all of which make exact targeting difficult.

17. (C) As an aside, Arnault said the UN report would be released on April 3, and it will ask for appropriate time for the JFFG to complete its report. He said that he and Khattak would personally brief FSG Missions in New York on the JFFG's preliminary findings on April 5.

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COMMENT

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18. (C) Khattak was extremely cautious in his remarks, prefacing all of comments with "highest probability" or in "all likelihood." Although he tried not to rule out any possibility, he conveyed what we had heard from SRS Arnault earlier (reftel), namely, that there was at least one helicopter involved, the weapon used in the attack on the Chkhalta Government building was an anti-tank rocket (likely fired from a helicopter), and there were 17 other impact craters made by BM-21 rockets fired from a southerly direction.

TEFFT